

License/Permit Requirements

A VALID FISHING LICENSE (SEE LICENSE REQUIREMENTS TABLE BELOW) IS REQUIRED FOR ALL TYPES OF FISHING ON STATE WATERS. To fish in Montana, most anglers need two licenses: a Conservation License and a Fishing License, see table below.

A Conservation License is needed before you can buy any fishing or hunting license that Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) issues. Conservation license applicants are required to provide their social security number in addition to the information usually requested. A valid driver's license or a valid photo ID is required to purchase a license.

A fishing license allows a person to fish for and possess any fish or aquatic invertebrate authorized by the state's fishing regulations. It is nontransferable and nonrefundable. The license enables one to fish from March 1 through the end of February of the following year.

Resident Licenses

To qualify for a resident license, a person must meet the criteria set out in MCA 87-2-102 and 202. To be a legal resident eligible to purchase a resident fishing license, you must have physically been living in Montana for at least 180 consecutive days (six months) immediately before purchasing any resident license; you must file Montana state income tax returns as a resident, if you are required to file; you must have registered your vehicles in Montana; if you are registered to vote, you must be registered in Montana; and you may not possess or apply for any resident hunting, fishing or trapping privileges in another state or country. At the time of purchase, a person must present a valid Montana driver's license or a valid Montana driver's examiner's identification card. If unsure of your residency status, contact a regional FWP office.

What License(s) Do I Need to Fish in Montana?		
Age	Resident	Nonresident
1-11	No license required. Must observe all limits and regulations.	No license required IF accompanied by an adult who holds a valid Montana fishing license. The combined daily and possession limit for the two (<u>or more</u>) anglers cannot exceed the legal limit for one licenses angler. To catch his or her own legal limit, the youth must purchase a fishing license. See nonresident licenses 15-62+ years of age.
12-14	Conservation License Only - \$8	
15-61	Conservation License (\$8) + Fishing License (\$5 for 2 consecutive days or \$18 for season, \$8 for season for anglers ages 15-17 years). Resident Sportsman and Youth Sportsman (12-17 years) licenses also include a season fishing license.	Conservation License (\$10) + Montana Fishing License (\$15 for 2 consecutive days, \$43.50 for 10 consecutive days or \$60 for season). Nonresident Deer A Combo or Nonresident Big Game Combo licenses also include a season fishing license.
62+	Conservation License Only - \$8	

State School Trust Lands

Your conservation license provides anglers, hunters and trappers access to legally accessible State School Trust Lands for fishing and hunting. Other recreational activities such as hiking and bird watching still require the \$10 state and recreational use permit. These activities cannot, by Federal statute, be covered by the conservation license. Additional information regarding the rules, regulations, and restrictions governing these activities is available from FWP or contact DNRC at 406-444-2074.

- On lands outside designated campgrounds there is a 2-day camping limit.
- Motorized travel is only allowed on public roads or on designated roads.
- No open fires are allowed except in designated campground fire pits. Contained mechanical heat sources are allowed.

Special Fishing Licenses

Warm Water Game Fish Stamp

The 1999 Montana Legislature passed a bill to require the purchase of a Warm Water Game Fish Stamp to help fund construction of a warm water game fish hatchery near Fort Peck. The stamp is required for anglers to possess any warm water fish caught in designated waters. An angler who is required to be licensed to fish in Montana and who possesses any warm water game fish (including, but not limited to, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, burbot, walleye, sauger, black crappie, white crappie, channel catfish, yellow perch, northern pike, and tiger muskellunge) on waters listed in each district must purchase a warm water game fish stamp. The stamp is not required just to fish if none of these species will be harvested. Resident youth under 15 years of age, residents 62 years of age and older, and resident disabled anglers are exempt.

Resident and Nonresident \$5.00

District regulations list the waters that require this stamp.

Paddlefish

All anglers must purchase a paddlefish tag to fish for paddlefish. To purchase a tag: Residents aged 15-61 must have a valid Conservation License and Fishing License. Resident youth 14 and younger and resident anglers over 62 must have a Conservation License. Nonresidents of any age, including youth 14 and younger, must have a valid Conservation License and a Fishing License. Limit of two tags per person.

Resident - **\$6.50** each Nonresident - **\$15** each

Bull Trout

Hungry Horse Reservoir, Lake Koocanusa and part of the South Fork Flathead River are open for a regulated and experimental bull trout angling season. **When fishing for bull trout each angler must have in possession a valid Bull Trout Catch Card for the specific water he/she is fishing.**

Catch Cards are free of charge, but must be acquired by application from the FWP Region One office in Kalispell or online at www.fwp.mt.gov. Completed applications must be presented at the regional headquarters or mailed to FWP Bull Trout Permit, 490 North Meridian, Kalispell MT 59901. Your 2006 Catch Card must be turned in to the Kalispell FWP office before you will be issued a 2007 Catch Card.

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Montana Resident With Disability

Resident Person With a Disability Conservation License - \$8

Must be permanently and substantially disabled. Applications and licenses available only at regional FWP offices. These licenses are not available to nonresidents. Allows the holder to fish.

Lifetime Fishing License for the Blind - \$10

Contact the Helena FWP Licensing office for information and an application.

Veterans Administration Patients

Permits are available for patients residing at VA Hospitals and residents of State institutions, except the State penitentiary. These free permits are available on-site at the VA hospital or State institution.

Legion of Valor

A Conservation License allows both residents and non-residents, regardless of age, to fish. Legion of Valor membership card required to qualify.

Care Facility

The manager or director of an eligible facility licensed in Montana may apply for permission to take supervised residents fishing during activities approved by the facility. Licensed facilities include long-term care, personal care, home for persons with developmental disabilities and home for persons with severe disabilities.

Education Exemptions

Free fishing license exemptions are available to qualified educational events and fishing clinics. For information on these free educational exemptions, call 406-444-9736.

Other Permit Requirements and Laws

Fishing Contests

A permit from FWP is required for most fishing contests. Contact your local FWP office for information and an application or download an application from the FWP Web Page.

Aquatic Invertebrates

Crayfish

A valid fishing license is required to harvest crayfish for personal use (see "Licenses to Fish in Montana" for specific license requirements). Crayfish may be taken in traps no larger than 24x12x12 inches. Commercial harvest of crayfish for any purpose is prohibited.

Mussels

In accordance with the Administrative Rules of Montana, Section 12.2.501, it is unlawful to take or possess freshwater mussels or their shells for sale or commercial distribution.

Collecting Aquatic Invertebrates Commercially

Persons wishing to collect other aquatic invertebrates (such as leeches and aquatic insects) for sale or commercial distribution should contact their regional FWP office for information.

Commercial Fishing Licenses

Commercial Whitefish Fishing

A permit is required to sell whitefish.

Hook and Line Permits: Whitefish may be taken by hook and line for sale in the following waters--Flathead Lake north of the Flathead Reservation boundary, Flathead River north of Flathead Lake, and Whitefish Lake.

Net/Seine Permits: Whitefish may be taken from the Kootenai River and tributaries (within one mile of the Kootenai River). Application required; fee is \$200 plus a \$1,000 bond per year.

Bait Fish Seining: Commercial Harvest, \$10 Fee

Contact regional FWP offices for a Bait Fish Seining License and a list of waters open to commercial seining: \$10 fee per year.

A bait fish seining license is required:

- For persons 15 years of age and older to seine for and transport bait fish for commercial purposes in Montana;
- For any person who seines for and has in his/her possession more than 24 dozen nongame bait fish.

Nongame bait fish (except carp, goldfish and rainbow smelt) may be harvested commercially and transported in accordance with Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) Section 12.7.201-12.7.206. Live bait fish or leeches may not be imported into Montana for commercial or other purposes unless authorized by FWP. Bait fish may not be exported without FWP authorization. Call 406-452-6181 or go online at fwp.mt.gov for more information.

Fish Import Permits

A permit is required to import live fish into Montana. Contact the FWP Fish Health Lab in Great Falls at 406-452-6181 or download an application from the FWP Web Page.

Private Fish Ponds – License Requirements, \$10 Fee for 10 years

A person who owns or lawfully controls a private fish pond may obtain a license from FWP to stock the pond with fish. Only lawfully purchased fish may be planted. Contact your local FWP office for more information and an application or download the application from the FWP Web Page. No fishing license is required to fish on licensed, privately stocked fish ponds. Fishing license requirements apply to all other ponds and/or waters on private land.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR ANGLERS

Montana Trespass Law

Montana's trespass law states that a member of the public has the privilege to enter private land only:

- with the explicit permission of the landowner or his/her agent, or
- when the landowner has failed to post a no-trespassing notice or mark legal accesses with 50 square inches of orange.

FWP recommends that anglers obtain permission from the landowner before entering private lands. Recreationists are urged to obtain complete rules about this law from any FWP office.

Montana Stream Access Law

Under the Montana Stream Access Law, the public may use rivers and streams for recreational purposes up to the ordinary high water marks. Although the law gives recreationists the right to use rivers and streams for water-related recreation, it does not give them the right to enter private lands bordering those streams or to cross private lands to gain access to streams without landowner permission. FWP recommends that recreationists obtain landowner permission to cross private land to access a stream. Complete rules are available at any FWP office.

Children's Fishing Waters

Numerous waters across the state provide excellent fishing opportunities for young anglers. A few waters have been set aside exclusively for the use of young anglers. Waters posted as Children's Fishing Waters are open to fishing during the entire year to persons 14 years of age and younger only with the exception of Indian Road Pond (see District Exceptions). Children's Fishing Waters are:

Blacktail Meadows Pond, Dillon	Home Run Pond, Glasgow
Elks Club Pond near Lewistown	Indian Road Pond near Townsend
Fairground Pond, Helena	Kid's Pond in the Warm Springs Wildlife Management
Fort Peck Kids Pond near Fort Peck	Area near Warm Springs
Gheny Pond near Twin Bridges	Vigilante Pond near Virginia City

Catch-And-Release Angling

Waters designated catch-and-release for one or more species of fish require that those fish be immediately released alive. Use of proper handling techniques will improve the chance of survival for any fish released. A fish that is released may still die from: deep hooking injury; internal organ damage from being squeezed; bacterial infections resulting from loss of slime in the handling process; effects of physical stress from being played too long; low dissolved oxygen in live wells; and heat shock from being held in shallow water or live wells.

Releasing Fish

To ensure a released fish has the best chance for survival:

- Play the fish as rapidly as possible. Do not play it to total exhaustion.
- Keep the fish in water as much as possible when handling and removing the hook.
- Remove the hook gently. Do not squeeze the fish or put your fingers in its gills. There are release devices available from most sporting/fishing stores to assist you and, use of barbless hooks makes releasing fish easier.
- If the fish is deeply hooked, cut the line. Do not yank the hook out. Most fish survive with hooks left in them.
- Release the fish only after it has gained its equilibrium. If necessary, gently hold the fish upright in the current facing upstream and move it slowly back and forth.
- Release the fish in quiet water close to the area where it was hooked.

Lake/Reservoir fishing from boats:

- Fish caught from deep water may be unable to vent their air bladder and may "bloat". Puncturing the air bladder or "fizzing" is not recommended because it may cause infections. A simple release tool will facilitate releasing the fish in deep water and recompressing it quickly. All you need is a 50-foot cord, a weight and a hook. Dull the hook, flatten the barb and attach the hook inline just above the weight with knots at the hook eye and bend. The hook should be pointing down toward the weight. Place the hook over the lower jaw of the fish and let the weight drop, pulling the fish down rapidly. A tug on the cord will release the fish.

Fishing Methods

Fish may be taken only by hook and line or other approved methods. Regulations for the taking of fish are listed in the standard regulations for each fishing district. A valid fishing license (or equivalent authorization) is required for all types of fishing on state waters.

Fishing From a Boat and Float Outfitting

Fishing from a boat and float outfitting is prohibited on some rivers or streams (see District Exceptions for regulated waters) in the following ways:

- **"Float fishing"** prohibits fishing from a boat or wade fishing when fishing access is gained by boat.
- **"Fishing from a boat"** prohibits only fishing while on the boat. Using a boat to access wade fishing opportunities is allowed.
- **"Float outfitting"** is the operation of any boat for the commercial purpose of float fishing by a fishing outfitter or fishing guide.

Illegal Introductions

It is illegal to import and release any wildlife in Montana without FWP authorization. Introduced fish, aquatic invertebrates (insects, crayfish, etc.) and noxious weeds pose a threat to our valuable natural fish and aquatic resources because they:

- Compete with native or other desired species for food and space.
- Interbreed with established species or disrupt spawning.
- Carry and spread diseases and parasites.

Help prevent the spread of nuisance species like New Zealand mudsnails. For more information contact your local FWP office.

- **It is unlawful** to move live fish, aquatic invertebrates or plants from one body of water to another without FWP authorization.
- **It is unlawful** to release any live aquarium fish or bait fish.

Help Prevent the Spread of Whirling Disease

- Remove all mud and aquatic plants from your vehicle, boat, anchor, trailer and axles, waders, boots and fishing gear before departing a fishing access site or boat dock.
- Drain all water from your boat and equipment—including coolers, buckets and live wells—before departing a fishing access site or boat dock.
- Dry your boat and equipment between river trips.
- **It is unlawful** to transport fish from one body of water to another.
- **It is unlawful** to use parts of trout, salmon or whitefish for bait.

Prevent the Spread of Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds are everyone's problem. Weed infestations cause increased runoff to our rivers and streams, and threaten critical habitat for trout and other fish. Please do your part to help prevent the spread of weeds.

To prevent the spread of harmful species:

- Learn to identify noxious weeds.
- Avoid parking, walking or driving through weed infestations.
- Wash vehicles before and after trips afield.
- Feed weed-free forage to livestock before and during backcountry trips.
- Keep clothing, equipment and pets weed-free.

Save Montana from Aquatic Nuisance Species

Before launching.....Before leaving:

REMOVE all aquatic plants and animals;
DRAIN lake or river water;
DISPOSE of unwanted live bait on land;
WASH your boat, tackle, downriggers,
lines and trailer; and **DRY** everything.

Disposal of Dead Fish and Fish Entrails

When you are in a boat on the water and fishing, it is acceptable to dispose of fish entrails in deep water in the lake, reservoir or river. When you are near or on the shore or bank, it is recommended that you bag all fish remains and dispose of the bag in an appropriate garbage receptacle. Help keep the shoreline clean for others. It is unlawful to discard game fish; however, dead non-game fish may be treated like fish entrails for disposal purposes (puncture the bladder first so the fish will sink).

Check Stations

Anglers and hunters are required to stop as directed at all designated check stations on the way to and from fishing and hunting areas, even if they have no fish or game to be checked.

Off-Highway Vehicles

An off-highway vehicle must have a current Off-Highway decal displayed in a conspicuous place to be used for off-road recreation on public lands in Montana (including frozen lakes and reservoirs). Decals are available from county treasurers. Owners of unregistered and unlicensed OHVs from other states must purchase a temporary use permit through FWP regional offices in person or by mail through the Helena FWP office. Nonresidents who operate licensed machines for more than 30 days in Montana must obtain the temporary use permit also.

Indian Reservations

- Certain waters on Indian Reservations may have special rules and permits. Specific information should be obtained from Reservation headquarters.
- The State of Montana and Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes have entered into a cooperative agreement on the Flathead Reservation. A tribal permit is required to fish on waters within the exterior boundary of the Reservation. Call tribal headquarters at 406-675-2700 for information.

Federal Wildlife Refuges

- Certain waters on Federal Wildlife Refuges may have special rules. Specific information may be obtained from the headquarters of the federal refuge involved.
- Commercial bait regulations are not valid on Indian Reservation waters. For information, contact local tribal officials.

National Parks

Certain waters within National Parks have special rules. Specific information may be obtained from the park headquarters. For Glacier National Park, call 406-888-7800 and for Yellowstone National Park, call 307-344-7381.

Motorboat and Vessel Restrictions

The use of vessels and motors may be restricted on some waters. A complete, updated, copy of the Montana Boating Laws is available from any FWP office, or by calling 406-444-2535. Additional restrictions may be posted at access points to specific waters. Contact the County Sheriff's office or federal agency where you will be boating to find out if additional restrictions are in effect.

All passengers under the age of 12 must wear a PFD at all times when the motorboat or vessel is in motion if the motorboat or vessel is less than 26 feet long. A wearable, U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD must be available for each occupant. Children 12 years of age or younger may not operate a motorboat or a personal watercraft (jet skis, water bikes, etc. that use a motor or engine to power a water jet pump as the primary source of propulsion and that is designed to be operated by a person standing or kneeling on the vessel) powered by a motor rated at more than 10 horsepower unless accompanied by someone 18 years of age or older. Youths 13 and 14 may not operate those vessels without possessing a valid Montana motorboat operator's safety certificate or evidence of completing an approved water safety course, unless accompanied by someone 18 years of age or older. A home-study boating course is available from FWP.

Sailboats 12 feet long and longer, and all motorboats and personal watercraft must be registered and numbered. Non-motorized sailboats less than 12 feet long and manually propelled boats, regardless of length, are exempt from registration and taxation. Also exempt are a vessel's lifeboat, government-owned boats, and properly registered boats from out-of-state or country that will not be in Montana for more than 90 consecutive days.

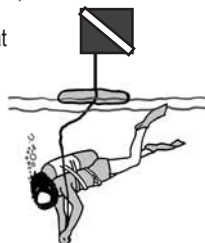
No-Wake Zones on Lakes – Western Fishing District Only

All watercraft operating on public lakes and reservoirs of 35 surface acres or less within the Western Fishing District are limited to no-wake speed. The Montana Boating Laws booklet contains a complete list of these lakes. Contact your local FWP office for a copy.

All watercraft operating on public lakes and reservoirs greater than 35 surface acres within the Western Fishing District are limited to no-wake speed from the shoreline to 200 feet from the shoreline. No-wake speed is defined as a speed whereby there is no "white" water in the track or path of the vessel or in created waves immediate to the vessel.

General Boating Restrictions

- Do not anchor a vessel in a position that obstructs a passageway ordinarily used by others.
- Do not operate a vessel within:
 - 20 feet of a designated swimming area marked by white and orange buoys.
 - 50 feet of a swimmer in the water except for boats towing water skiers.
 - 75 feet of an angler or a waterfowl hunter unless it is unavoidable. If unavoidable, travel at no wake speed or at the minimum speed necessary to maintain upstream progress.
 - 200 feet of a diver's flag.
- Motorboats and vessels 16 feet and longer (except canoes and kayaks) must also have a throwable type IV PFD on board.
- It is unlawful to operate or be in actual physical control of a motorboat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- All motorboats and vessels must carry equipment as required by the Montana Boating Laws.



Boaters: This flag means there are scuba divers in the area.

Montana law requires that motorboats stay at least 200 feet away from a **DIVER DOWN** flag. Violators may be subject to a fine of \$500 or 6 months imprisonment, or both. MCA 23-2-525.

Montana FWP Foundation

The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Foundation is a non-profit corporation to provide private financial support for the critical efforts of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and for preserving and enhancing Montana's natural, cultural and recreational resources for future generations.

The Foundation was created to help support new work. It will build an endowment of corporate donations and individual gifts to fund programs that conserve wild places, restore imperiled species, maintain access, protect unique cultural and historic parks and educate kids about the wonders of our world. For more information or if you would like to make a contribution, call 406-444-6759, or write Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Foundation at PO Box 200701, Helena MT 59620-0701.

Sport Fish Consumption Guidelines

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services has issued advisories for the consumption of fish from certain Montana waters. Fish from some Montana waters contain levels of chemicals that may be especially harmful to young children, nursing mothers, and childbearing women or persons frequently consuming fish. Information, advice and additional details about fish consumption is available from the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Food and Consumer Safety Section, Helena, Montana, 59620; telephone 406-444-5306 or on the internet at <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov>. This information is also available in a brochure titled "Montana Sport Fish Consumption Guidelines" which can be obtained at any FWP office or license provider, or on the FWP Web Page.

General Guidelines to Reduce Your Health Risk

- **Keep smaller fish for eating.** They taste better and have had less time to accumulate contaminants than older, bigger fish.
- **Eat smaller meals when you eat big fish and eat them less often.**
- **Eat fish that are less likely to be contaminated.** Contaminants such as mercury and PCBs build up in large predatory fish such as walleye and lake trout. Their prey, such as yellow perch and rainbow trout, have less contaminants.
- **Clean and cook your fish properly.** Trim fish to remove fatty portions. Cook fish in a way that drains juices away from the meat.

See list of water bodies on the next page.

Water Bodies with Fish Consumption Advisory

Ackley Lake (S of Hobson)	Frenchman Reservoir (NE of Malta)	Ninepipes NWR
Alder Gulch	Fresno Reservoir	Noxon Rapids Reservoir
Bair Reservoir	Georgetown Lake	Park Lake (SW of Helena)
Basin Creek (near Basin)	Hauser Reservoir	Petrolia Reservoir
Big Spring Creek	Hebgen Reservoir	Prickly Pear Creek
Bighorn Lake	Holter Reservoir	Seeley Lake
Bynum Reservoir	Hyalite Lake (S of Bozeman)	Silver Creek
Canyon Ferry Reservoir	Island Lake (SE of Libby)	Soda Butte Creek (near Cooke City)
Castle Rock Lake (Colstrip)	Judith River	South Sandstone Reservoir (W of Baker)
Clark Canyon Reservoir	Lake Francis	Swan Lake
Clear Lake (S of Alberton)	Lake Koocanusa	Tenmile Creek (near Helena)
Cliff Lake (Jewel Basin)	Lake Mary Ronan	Thompson Falls Reservoir
Cooney Reservoir	Leigh Lake (S of Libby)	Tiber Reservoir
Crystal Lake (E of Twin Bridges)	Lower Stillwater Lake	Tongue River Reservoir
Culver Pond (Red Rocks NWR)	Madison River	Upper Cold Lake (Mission Mtns)
Dailey Lake	Martinsdale Reservoir	Upper Two medicine Lake (GNP)
East Fork Reservoir	Medicine Lake (NWR)	Whitefish Lake
Ennis Lake	Milltown Reservoir	Willow Creek Reservoir
Flathead Lake	Missouri River	
Fort Peck Reservoir	Mystic Lake (S of Bozeman)	
	Nelson Reservoir	

Penalties for Violations of the Law

Most fish and game violations are misdemeanors that are punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1,000 and imprisonment in for not longer than six months. The court may also order the forfeiture of any current hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and the privilege to hunt, fish and trap, or use state lands for recreational purposes for a period set by the court.

Taking an over limit of fish will result in a fine **plus** restitution to the state for each fish over the limit. Restitution for bull trout may be up to \$500 per fish and for river grayling, white sturgeon, and paddlefish restitution is \$300 per fish.

A person who intentionally imports, introduces, or transplants fish in violation of state law is guilty of an offense punishable by a fine of not more \$5,000 and imprisonment for up to one year. The person is also liable for the amount necessary to eliminate or mitigate the effects of the violation. Upon conviction or forfeiture of bond or bail the person shall forfeit any current hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and the privilege to hunt, fish and trap in this state for a minimum of 24 months. If the effects of the violation cannot be eliminated or mitigated, a person may be required to forfeit the privilege to hunt, fish or trap in Montana for the rest of his/her life.

It Is Unlawful And A Misdemeanor

- To violate any regulations listed in this booklet.
- To introduce any fish or viable fish eggs into any waters without FWP permission.
- To refuse to show one's fishing license upon demand.
- To refuse to show one's fish upon demand.
- To loan or transfer your fishing license or tags to any person.
- To sell game fish except as prescribed by FWP Commission regulations.
- To leave or dump any dead animal, fish, garbage or litter in or on any state, federal or private property where public recreation is permitted.
- To stun or kill fish by using any carbide, lime, giant powder, dynamite, or other explosive compounds, or any corrosive or narcotic poison. To possess these substances within 100 feet of any stream where fish are found is unlawful.
- To hire or retain an unlicensed outfitter or guide.
- To waste any part of game fish suitable for food (see Waste of Fish or Game definition at the end of this booklet).